

A Place
for Coming
of Age:



WARRENTON'S

Frog Pond

by
C.S. Welborn



WARRENTON'S FROG POND

This book has been written for the purpose of recording as much of the history of Warrenton, Oregon's Frog Pond as possible.

The facts presented in this article are not exhaustive; likewise there may be inaccuracies that need correction. Any further information, experiences, or insight on the history of the 2nd Street island and its pond would be welcome. Many persons contributed to this article; a special thank you to Diane Collier, Pat Williams, Dave Palmberg, Gladys Dyer, Leroy Dunn, Vernon Hart, Martin Nygaard, Gil Gramson, Gail Antilla, Chuck, Darryl, and Charlotte Bergerson, Jim Campbell, Bud Haskill, and the Fenton brothers (Allen and Jack) for historical information about this little corner of the world. Thanks also the Clatsop County Assessor's Office and the City of Warrenton Community Planning Office. My apologies to those not mentioned who also contributed to this article.

Written by: C. Welborn

Layout and Design:
Sara E. Welborn

Published in an edition of 1000 soft cover copies in July, 2011.

Printed and bound at Lesh Printing, Fremont, Ohio.

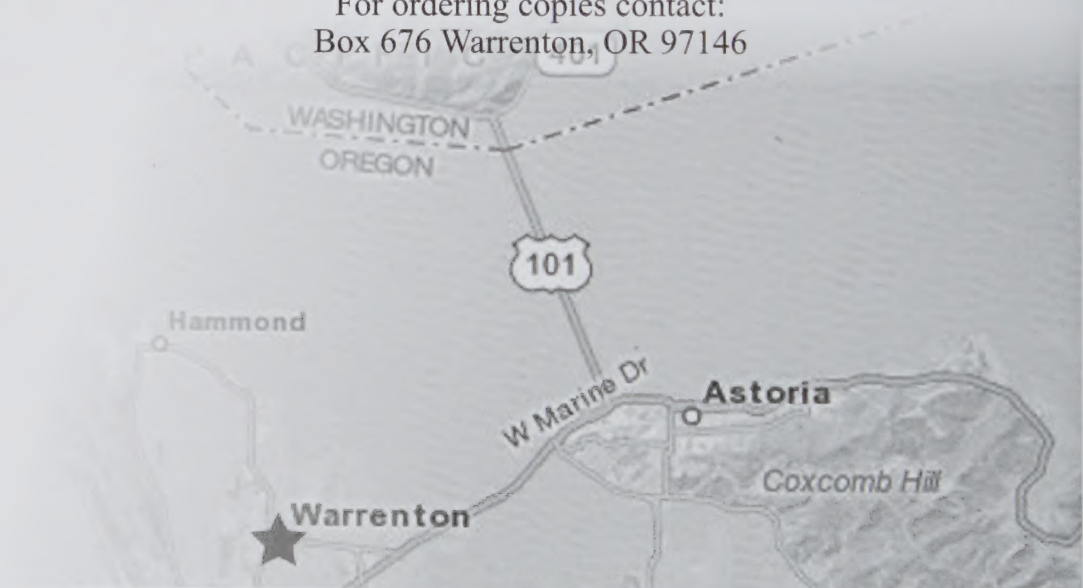
Copyright © 2011 by C.S. Welborn

FIRST EDITION

Printed in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

For ordering copies contact:

Box 676 Warrenton, OR 97146

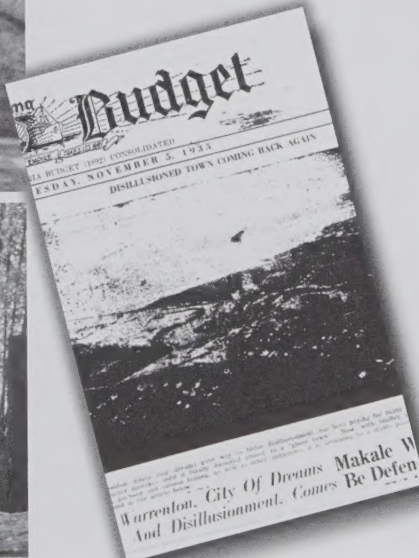


WARRENTON'S FROG POND



A Place for Coming of Age: WARRENTON'S Frog Pond

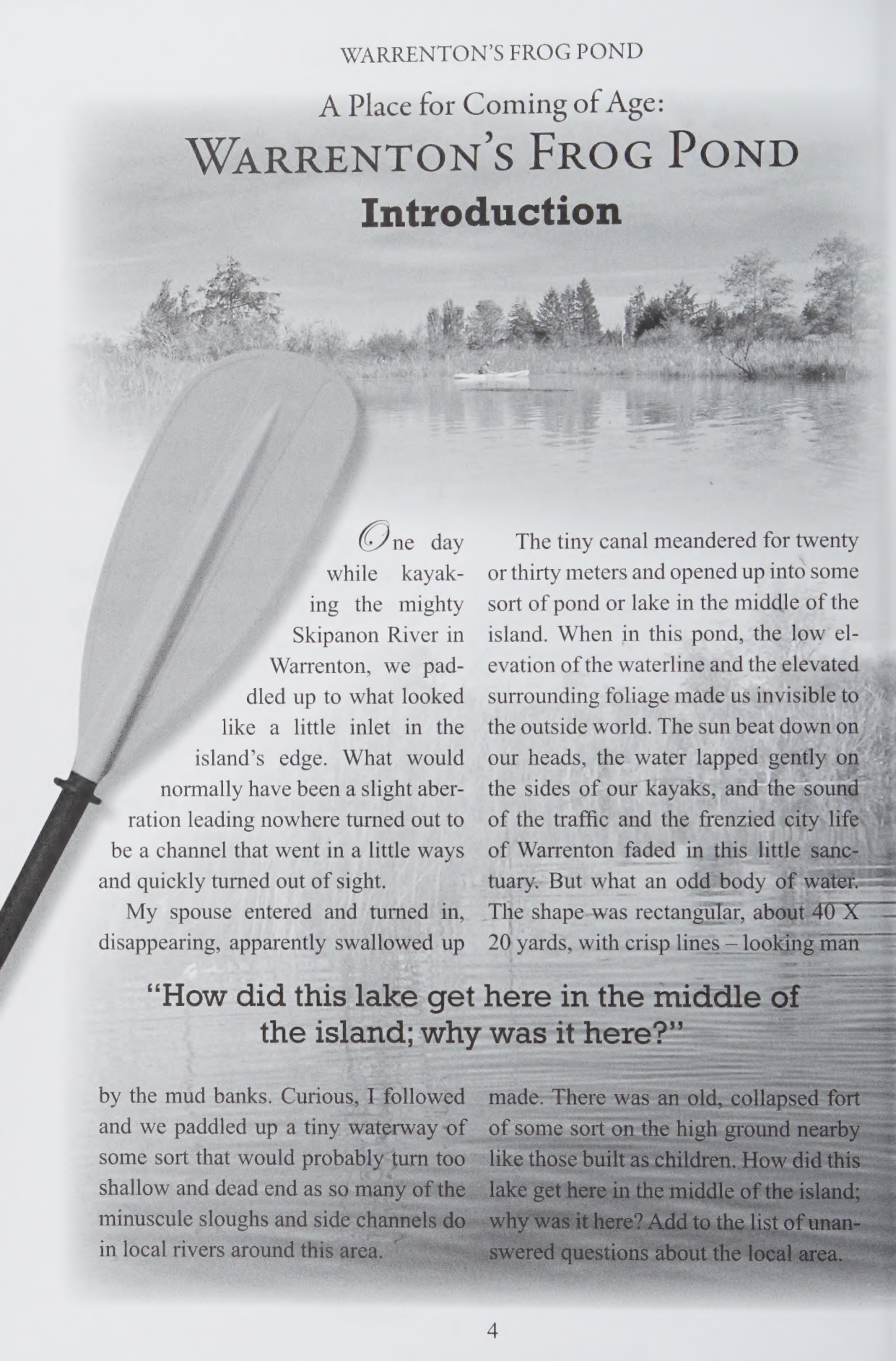
- 4 Introduction
- 6 chapter one: **History**
- 8 chapter two:
Origins: Island and Pond
- 12 chapter three: **Dredging**
- 16 chapter four: **Dikes**
- 18 chapter five:
Pond Features
- 20 chapter six:
Crossing to the Island
- 22 chapter seven:
Various Recollections



A Place for Coming of Age:

WARRENTON'S FROG POND

Introduction



One day while kayaking the mighty Skipanon River in Warrenton, we paddled up to what looked like a little inlet in the island's edge. What would normally have been a slight aberration leading nowhere turned out to be a channel that went in a little ways and quickly turned out of sight.

My spouse entered and turned in, disappearing, apparently swallowed up

The tiny canal meandered for twenty or thirty meters and opened up into some sort of pond or lake in the middle of the island. When in this pond, the low elevation of the waterline and the elevated surrounding foliage made us invisible to the outside world. The sun beat down on our heads, the water lapped gently on the sides of our kayaks, and the sound of the traffic and the frenzied city life of Warrenton faded in this little sanctuary. But what an odd body of water. The shape was rectangular, about 40 X 20 yards, with crisp lines – looking man

“How did this lake get here in the middle of the island; why was it here?”

by the mud banks. Curious, I followed and we paddled up a tiny waterway of some sort that would probably turn too shallow and dead end as so many of the minuscule sloughs and side channels do in local rivers around this area.

made. There was an old, collapsed fort of some sort on the high ground nearby like those built as children. How did this lake get here in the middle of the island; why was it here? Add to the list of unanswered questions about the local area.

WARRENTON'S FROG POND

Shortly after their discovery, we stumbled on a book written by a local lifelong resident of Warrenton – a collection of short essays by Charlotte Bergerson written for the local Warrenton newspaper about growing up in Warrenton and Hammond.

“[The boys] have this private swimming hole [and] would hate it if they knew we were here.”

– Charlotte Bergerson

There was no order or chronology to these stories – one was about the local movie theater back in the day; another about the grade school; and so on. For those interested in local Warrenton history, this book is a treasure trove. One essay reopened interest in the little lake within the island in the middle of the Skipanon River. Charlotte recalls in the essay “The Frog Pond,” around the early 1950s, “The only way to get to the pond was to walk across [the Skipanon River on] logs.” . . . “[My girlfriend and I] sat on the warm sandy bank and surveyed the forbidden surroundings – a large square pool with a handmade diving board of sorts. It was such a quiet, peaceful spot, a regular oasis. No wonder the boys liked to come here... [The boys] have this private swimming hole [and] would hate it if they knew we were here.” ♦



CHAPTER ONE

History

One of the dilemmas with eyewitness testimony is that no one person sees contemporary reality with absolute clarity. Add the passage of time to this problem (the essence of "history") and difficulties compound quickly. After eyewitnesses have passed, the seeker-of-historical-truth is then left with either hearsay testimony of persons who spoke to eyewitnesses or else written records of whatever reliability.

For events, persons, or places considered of little importance, whatever evidence that remains is usually sparse. Fortunately, eyewitness testimony exists to help bring some of the lively history to light for the little area around 2nd Street and the Skipanon River.

Stand on the west dike today at 2nd Street looking over the river and the area is deserted and idyllic. But this was not always the case. This scenic little corner of Warrenton was at one time the location of some of the toughest, most lucrative industry produced in the area. But it was also the scene of youthful leisure, play, socializing, and the coming of age for many Warrenton boys in years long-past. ♦



WARRENTON'S FROG POND



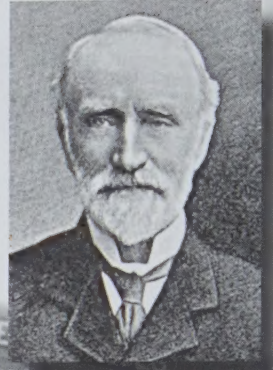
NYGAARD LOG DUMP, date unknown, east end of 3rd Street and the Skipanon River. Ingvald Nygaard stands on the dock. Logs were floated at ebb tide from here north to the collection point just north of the Harbor Street Bridge. During this process the logs were moved north past the island containing the frog pond, at the end of 2nd Street.



CHAPTER TWO

Origins: Island and Pond

D. K. WARREN



Had history gone another way, Warrenton could have been named "Tullertown" or "Stilsonville." The Clatsop County land records show that in the early 1860s, 640 acres of land in what would later become Warrenton were co-owned by Jeremiah G. Tuller and his wife Miriam.

Part of this land then went to a Jesse M. Stilson in February of 1864. (Stilson's acres included the land that would later include the island off of modern-

day Second

Street on the

Skipanon. Later in 1878, Stilson sold his land to D.K. Warren and C. McGuire. Warren bought McGuire's share in 1880 and henceforth began his platting and building program of the area that would come to bear his name.

The land containing the island stayed within the Warren family until 1932 when it was appropriated by the Clatsop County Sheriff as, "1921 was the last year [that] taxes were paid on the tidelands and frontage to Warrenton." The Sheriff sold the property to Clatsop County in 1932 during the depression period, and then was sold to the City of Warrenton in 1937 for one dollar! Later in the 1970s, the island property became the center of an ownership dispute between the City of Warrenton and a private individual with the city winning out.

The island containing this small "frog pond" was not an island in Warrenton's early days, but rather a land promontory jutting from the west side around which the Skipanon River wended to the east side. Early photographs show the land outcrop jutting to the east prior to this channeling, and without the pond. Despite much speculation, the earliest witnesses interviewed cannot recall with certainty the chronology of the channeling of the peninsula-to-island or the formation of the pond. In fact, most had no idea that the present-day island used

Frog Pond Land: Early Timeline

1860s, early

Jeremiah G. and Miriam
Tuller

Co-owned 640 acres

1864

Jesse M. Stilson

Acquired part of the land

1878

D.K. Warren and C. McGuire
Acquired Stilson's land

1880

D.K. Warren

Purchased McGuire's share

1932

No longer in Warren family
Clatsop County Sheriff

1932

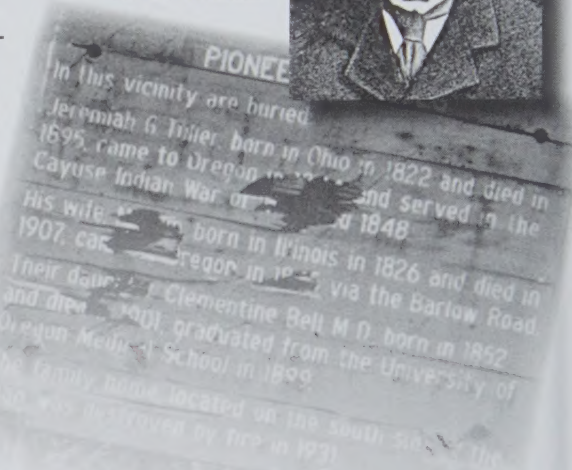
Clatsop County Sheriff
Sold property to Clatsop
County

1937

Clatsop County
Sold property to the City of
Warrenton

1970s

Dispute between City of
Warrenton/private indi-
vidual over island property
(City of Warrenton won)



WARRENTON'S FROG POND

to be a peninsula or that there was a time when the pond did not exist. Local businessman Martin Nygaard thinks that the river was dug out in a straight line through the base of this peninsula – perhaps to make log transport easier to the north. This occurred some time before he arrived on the scene in 1939.

evidence of this mill when he arrived on Warrenton's scene in the 1940s.

Clarence Sigurdson of an earlier generation (born 1901) used to play at this mill as a child. He reminisces that there was a large area underneath the sawdust bunkers in the boiler room where, "a [young] person could hide

"The logs "slid sideways down the truck, down a ramp right into the Skipanon. When these monsters hit the water there was a huge splash . . . it was quite spectacular." – Wallace Henry Reed

Lifelong locals Chuck and Charlotte Bergerson recall that there used to be much logging activity at the present-day east end of Second Street, near the place a commemorative bench, wood dock, and aluminum gangplank now sit. At some time in Warrenton's early history the Kelly mill sat at the east end of 2nd Street and the river. However, Chuck recalls that the mill was gone with no

without getting caught." Later, Clarence worked at this mill around 1919, and says that it had been in operation at



WORKING THE LOGS around the Harbor Street area.

WARRENTON'S FROG POND

least as early as 1911. A third generation resident of Warrenton whose property currently fronts this site recalls occasionally finding bricks from this old mill in the nearby brush.

One block upriver, at the end of 3rd Street where the short present day river walk begins, the Nygaard family had a log dump where logs were brought in by trucks. Here the logs went into the Skipanon River and then were floated downstream at ebb tide to points beyond.



Wallace Henry Reed remembers from his childhood that this process was quite a show for local kids. The logs "slid sideways down the truck, down a ramp right into the Skipanon. When these monsters hit the water there was a huge splash. . .it was quite spectacular." The logs were collected in the river, contained by pilings driven in the river on the east bank, and moved up the river past the island containing the "frog pond" and the main bridge. "Thus the whole river in that area was bank to bank filled with logs and one could actually walk over to Frog Island."

"Logging trucks would be lined up all the way down Main Street...waiting to drop their logs off at the landing" – Gladys Dyer

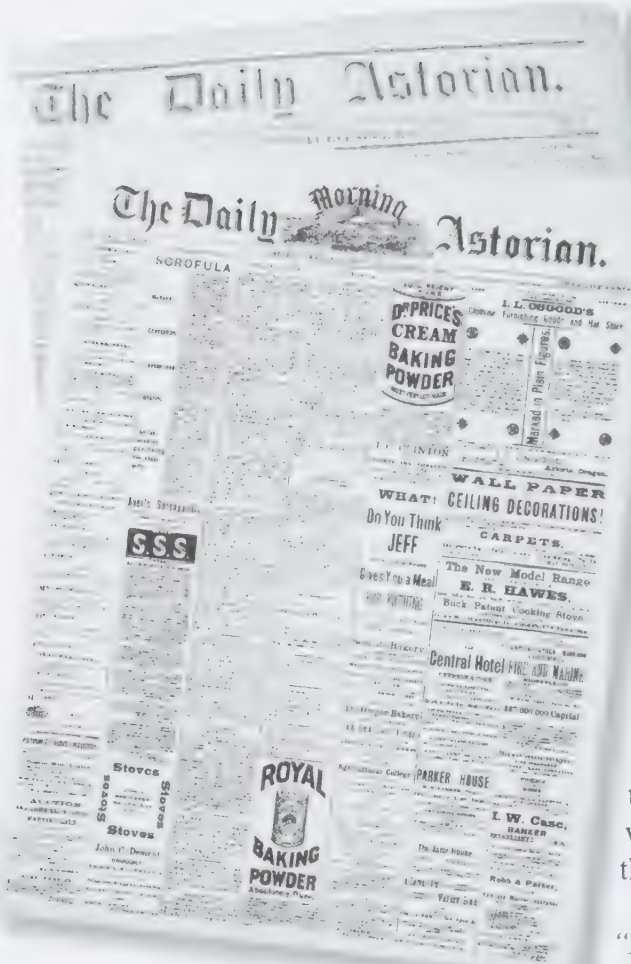
Another lifelong resident Gladys Dyer recalls, "Logging trucks would be lined up all the way down Main Street sometimes to the Methodist Church (6th Street) waiting to drop their logs off at the landing." Martin Nygaard began poling these logs when he was a sophomore in high school. They would stand on the logs with pikes directing them downstream at ebb tide to the approximate location of the present day Harbor Street bridge. Here, the logs were secured into booms (tied collections of logs) and moved out by tugs into the Columbia to various mills around the area for cutting.

Nygaard remembers, sometimes "we used to handle 70 or 80 truck loads of logs a day." Two tug companies were used: Knapp-ton and Arrow Towboat Company. Logs were moved to the local Prouty mill, and other Oregon mills at Westport, Wauna, and Linnton (near Portland).◆

A LOAD OF LOGS about to go in the river at the Third Street landing.

CHAPTER THREE

Dredging



The need to dredge and straighten the Skipanon had long been recognized. The U.S. War Department's 1882 Annual Report of the Secretary of War noted that the Skipanon had, "sufficient depth for ordinary river steamboating, but three sharp bends make the channel too tortuous for the longer steamers. . . . If necessary, a canal 500 feet long, of easy excavation, could be made, to cut off the bend where the channel is the most difficult in direction." Though not certain to which river bend this report refers, it could be the current 2nd St. area, the sharpest bend in the river. Since at this early date the main boat landing in Warrenton was upstream (south) at modern day 13th St, the sharp curve at (modern day) 2nd St. would have been one of the obstacles in the river.

One 1969 engineering study says, "In 1931, the Skipanon River channel was dredged from the mouth to 4,500 ft above the railroad bridge at Warrenton". This distance is about one mile, which is

"The early Astoria newspapers...have much information about the dredging work in the lower Skipanon from 1920 and later..."

the approximate distance to the old boat landing at modern day 13th St. This area was called variously Lexington, Upper Landing, or Skipanon Landing. M. Guardino III and M. Riedel explain:

"The community of Lexington, which was laid out in 1848, was the forerunner of Warrenton and was the first county seat of Clatsop County. Lexington was a post office in the early history of Oregon. The site of Lexington was near the south limits of Warrenton and about where Skipanon Station was situated. The name Lexington

WARRENTON'S FROG POND

fell into disuse and for many years the territory where Warrenton is now was known as Skipanon. Small boats went up Skipanon River to the place known as Skipanon, or Upper Landing, and there unloaded passengers and goods [to go south] for Clatsop Plains.”

The early Astoria newspapers (Astoria Budget; Astoria Morning Budget; Astoria Evening Budget; Morning Astorian; Evening Astorian-Budget) have much information about the dredging work in the lower Skipanon from 1920 and later, with frequent mention of the Port of Astoria’s dredge Natoma. When location is mentioned for the work of this dredge, it was always north of the bridge in the lumber mill and dock area.

A 1920 issue of the Astoria Evening

Budget cryptically mentions that while the Natoma was dredging around the Warrenton Lumber Company docks, the clam shell dredge owned by the Hammond Lumber Company was working around the Kelly Mill, making “channel improvements.”

An historical addendum for the Clatsop County “Official Record of Descriptions of Real Property” says, “The City of Warrenton indicates that the Corps of Engineers dug a channel through the peninsula in approximately 1922 to 1924, another channel was dug about 1940. This created the islands..., which were and still are part of the Jeremiah G. Tuller Donation Land Claim No. 43.”

RIGHT: Refuse from a cutter-head dredge being dumped, somewhere in Warrenton near the river.

BOTTOM: The much-used dredge Natoma around the close of WWI.”



Refuse from a cutter-head dredge being dumped, somewhere in Warrenton near the river.



Dredging Skipanon River Warrenton, Ore. Spruce Div. U.S. Army July 1918

A 1935 issue of the Astoria Budget seems to refute this dating scheme by featuring a picture of Warrenton showing the 2nd St. as a peninsula and not an island. However, the picture used was a fairly stock photo dating sometime from the 1920s. Lacking many aerial photos of Warrenton in early years, the newspaper's editor likely took an earlier photo for the story on economic growth in Warrenton. This change of landscape from peninsula-to-island can be easily visualized today; standing on Harbor St.

“The dredging of the Warrenton dock basin was started by the Natoma in 1919-20, which served a long life dredging channels around the lower Columbia area”

bridge looking south, the short north-south water channel on the Skipanon at the end of 2nd Street where the little dock now sits used to be solid land.

Local Port historian Russ Dart notes that in January, 1917, Warrenton residents had been pressing to deepen the Skipanon River to encourage industrial growth. This work was approved late in 1917. Clarence Sigurdson relates that sometime around 1918, “the City of Warrenton sold

two hundred thousand dollars worth of bonds and started to build bulkheads to straighten and dredge the Skipanon River so larger ships could come in.”

The Army Corps of Engineers gave this contract to the Port of Astoria. Work was done by the Natoma which despite occasional mishaps (such as temporarily sinking in April, 1919) served a long life dredging channels around the lower Columbia area.

Jim Campbell, who owns a dredging operation locally, thinks that the dredg-

ing was probably done by a cutter-head suction dredge. These dredges feature a head at the end of a pipe that rotates, cutting through debris, which is then suctioned up the pipe and dropped at a dumping site in another place.

Indeed Dart's local history of the Port of Astoria notes that the Natoma – the dredge that did most of the dredging in the area between 1918 and WWII – indeed was a suction dredge. How-

THE NATOMA dredging the Skipanon.



WARRENTON'S FROG POND

ever, clamshell scoop dredges were also present. These dredges have two jaws that open to pick up material, then close to contain it and lift it away where it is dumped in a nearby barge or on land somewhere else.

C. Sigurdson mentions such a scoop that built dikes in the lower Columbia area with a boom (long arm) that came from the yardarm of the Cairnsmore shipwreck from the WW I period. The dredging of the Warrenton dock basin was started by the Natoma in 1919-20. This dredging of the lower Skipanon occurred for many years. After years of bureaucratic red tape, federal assistance was granted in 1931 to dredge the Skipanon between the Columbia River mouth and the dock area and perhaps beyond, which project was largely finished by August, 1931.

Local resident Leroy Dunn thinks the maintenance dredging of the Skipanon upstream from the Harbor Street bridge was likely done by local engineer Herb Palmberg. Palmberg owned several dredges that did work in the Skipanon area. Herb's son Dave, however, recalls the three dredges his father used mainly worked around the mooring basin north of the bridge, and this in the 1950s much later than the time the peninsula

was made an island. One of Palmberg's dredge floats – a converted LST from earlier WWII stock – remained half-sunken on the 8th St. dike until about 2008 when it was removed.

Many residents note there were boating operations (clam and oyster processing, and a boat landing [Skipanon or Upper Landing]) for transportation around 13th Street further upriver. Boyhood resident of Warrenton Allen Fenton speaks of how the dredge Pokomo would come to clean the river debris and the sinker logs out of the river channel around 2nd St. earlier, in the 1940s. This was quite an event for the boys; the barge would come and drop its own pilings in the river so as not to be moved around with the tides. Then it would clean out the river with a clam shell shovel and dump the debris on the west side of the river between 2nd and 3rd streets. Enough debris was dumped to produce a second swimming pond that Allen and other boys would use in addition to the frog pond. ♦

DREDGING THE COLUMBIA IN 2010 with a longarm (backhoe-type) excavator. Note the excavator on one barge and the dumped material on another. The barges are pushed by "towboats." The arm of the excavator must be long enough to reach the bottom of the river, here over forty feet. These "backhoe" types of excavators were not used to dredge the Skipanon River in early years, being invented in the 1950s.



CHAPTER FOUR

Dikes

In conjunction with dredging was the need to dike the river to prevent flooding during higher tides. Many pictures exist showing local flooding in the Hammond-Flavel-Warrenton areas in earlier decades of the twentieth century. Many eyewitnesses also remain who experienced this flooding.

Warrenton resident Vernon Hart as a child lived on the Skipanon River, around First Street and Anchor Ave. He recalls the river breaching the dike right by his house. Clarence Sigurdson says the dikes were weakened by heavy rains, extreme high tides, and muskrat tunneling in the dikes. When dikes failed, he and friends saw it as a chance

for fun and adventure. They would get in small boats and “shoot the shoots” — riding through the broken places in the

brother Pinley (Phineas), which failed more often.

The diking of the Skipanon River was a progressive operation dating far back to the late 1870s, and possibly as early as the 1860s. Lyle Anderson, in his history of Warrenton, notes the founder of Warrenton, D. K. Warren, brought in Chinese labor to build “hand dikes” in



A SKIPANON DIKE, at low tide.

1878. Performing this mammoth task, these tough people, “used shovels to fill wheelbarrows and baskets.” At that

“The diking of the Skipanon River was a progressive operation dating far back to the late 1870s (possibly 1860s)”

dikes. He claims that the dikes built on the west side of the river by the town’s founder D. K. Warren were stronger than those built on the east side by Warren’s

time, the dikes were only four to five feet in height, and only built several places around the lower Skipanon.

As the diking of the river’s edge took

a more serious turn, the frog pond in the then-peninsula was likely created as dirt was taken to shore up the dikes. Local resident and politician Gil Gramson says that before the pond was known as the Frog pond, it was considered a “borrow area” to take dirt to reinforce the dikes. A local newspaper story from 1974 indirectly supports this claim, inferring that

Local dredge owner Jim Campbell says that one characteristic of drag line buckets is the hole is often shallower on the side with the crane. He adds that these buckets have been used in the north coast area to build and repair dikes for many years. Additionally, one swimmer recalls the north and south borders of the pond – the long straight edges that

“When dikes failed, we saw it as a chance for fun and adventure. We’d get in small boats and ‘shoot the shoots’ - riding through the broken places in the dikes.” – Clarence Sigurdson

the island had been used in the past for “diking materials.”

Vernon Hart recalls there was one barge with a crane and another barge to collect the mud “parked” up to the ground near the frog pond. Possibly these were the implements used to dig out the center of the island to take dirt to reinforce the dikes and/or to redirect the path of the river.

Chuck Bergerson suggests the shape of the pond indicates that a drag line bucket probably made the hole. This type of shovel, invented and used first in 1904 to dig the Chicago canal, features a crane that throws or places a bucket on a cable and drags it back to the crane. If used to make the frog pond, the crane would have sat at one of the short sides of the rectangle (on the west side), thrown its bucket to the east, and dragged it back the long length of the pond. Almost all former swimmers interviewed recall the eastern part of the pond being deeper than the west, which would have been characteristic of a drag line operation from the west.

were unnaturally linear – were vertical and deep while the shorter west and east sides were tapered. Such a configuration would be natural in a hole made by a drag-line excavator.

Apparently the City of Warrenton took ownership of the dikes in 1938 about 100 ft. on each side of the water and land beyond; then contracted out to Corp of Engineers and/or private firms to bolster and maintain these dikes. Despite the increase in height and width, Lyle Anderson notes the tsunami in the early 1960s overflowed the west dike at 3rd Street and flooded all the way to Main Street. ♦

CHAPTER FIVE

Pond Features

Gil Gramson thinks the little pond in the island took the name "Frog Pond" sometime in the 1940s. Since frogs are everywhere in the low lying areas to the east of the river, as well as being at the pond itself in great numbers, the name was apt. Port of Astoria historian Russ Dart says that in 1920 the fill from dredging the Warrenton dock area, "was being dumped in ponds surrounding the railroad depot where millions of frogs made the nights hideous." The Astoria Evening Budget adds that frogs in the area, "held nightly concerts for years."

Local boys were quick to see the value in this newly made island refuge, and immediately began to use it as their swimming hole and gathering area. Vernon Hart was one of the regulars in the early 1940s. He recalls the spot it was used by him and his crowd mostly during the WWII years.

"The pond was considered to be the boys' gathering place; girls were not welcome."

The pond was considered to be the boys' gathering place; girls were not welcome. Vernon explains, "We didn't mess with swimsuits or anything. We just skinny dipped." Charlotte recalls how (other) girls would borrow their dad's binoculars and attempt to spy on the boys thus engaged! According to Charlotte and Chuck, this spying activity was often done openly with the girls sitting on the Galena Street dike. (Apparently spying on bathing males was not uncommon on the North Coast.



TWO OF THE GIRLS who spied on frog pond swimmers with binoculars. (Names have been withheld to protect the guilty!)

WARRENTON'S FROG POND

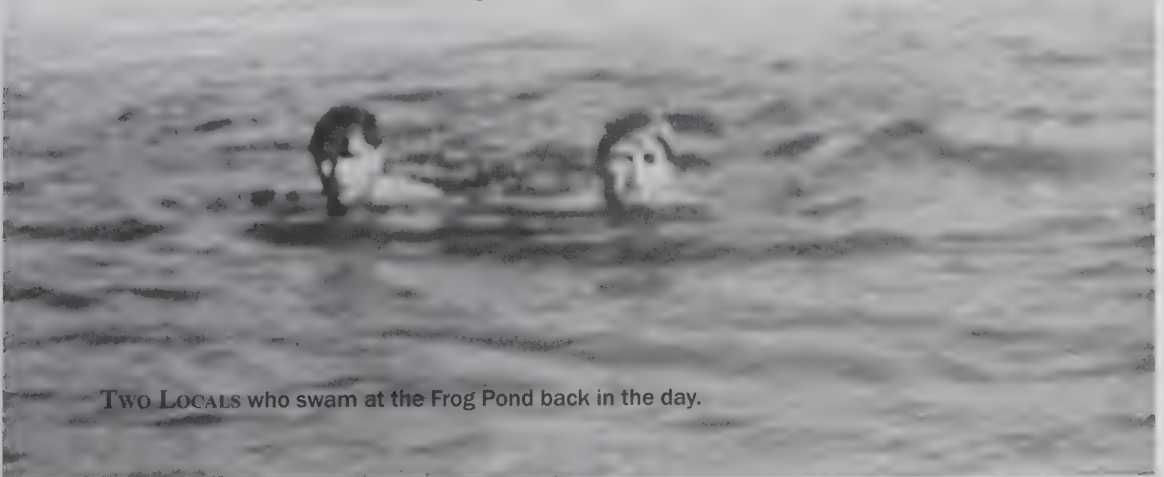
Russ Dart says that in 1920, an Astoria lady “with a telescope (!) reported to police that a large number of men bathed daily in the nude near the Port [of Astoria] docks.” These men, “were never apprehended;” apparently they *barely* got away.)

Interestingly, those persons interviewed born in the mid thirties acknowledge that skinny dipping was the norm while those born slightly later (around five years) say that they swam in clothing of some sort. Allen Fenton for example says boys would either swim in underclothes or in their street clothing.

A small, crude diving board was set up, but since the water depth was not too deep it wasn't meant for serious dives. He recalls a sand bank and bottom, as does Charlotte Bergerson, but does not remember how the sand got



there in such a naturally muddy environment. However, local historian Lyle Anderson says when the Skipanon was dredged in 1920, sand was piled everywhere. It could have been this sand at the pond was a product of this dredging until the mud and tidal silt came to predominate.◆



TWO LOCALS who swam at the Frog Pond back in the day.

CHAPTER SIX

Crossing to the Island

Martin Nygaard explains that the local boys (Vernon Hart was two or three years younger than him) would go across the logs in the river to the swimming island mostly at flood tide when the log moving operations had ceased. However, when the weather was hot they would go over whenever. Occasionally Martin would yell at them to be careful to not get pinned or trapped by the floating logs. Charlotte Bergerson explains the crossing process: "The only way to get to the pond was to walk across logs. This was no easy feat, and even though there were two logs tied together, they were still unsteady. When you came to the end, the logs dipped

ferent kids from different parts of town would come across in different ways and from different directions.

Allen's brother Jack Fenton, five years older, says that most kids came across on logs from the direction of the Harbor St. bridge or else from the west bank of the Skipanon at the end of 2nd St. The muddy bank down to the waterline presented its own obvious challenges, then the jump to the logs, the rolling, dipping logs, and the ascent up the bank on the other side. Jack recalls that the kids had a 2x12 board from the last log barrier across the water to the mud bank on the island but that the Nygaards would always remove it, making

"The only way to get to the pond was to walk across logs."

– Charlotte Bergerson

down and you had to jump to the next [log]." She recalls how reckless this process was because at the time she could not swim.

Allen Fenton (born 1940), who swam at the pond in the late 1940s to early 50s, remembers the curve of the Skipanon River at the east end of the island being filled with old growth logs from the Tillamook forest burns. (These incidents were a series of four fires in forests around Tillamook between the years 1933 and 1951, burning 355,000 acres of timber.) Thus there were always logs to cross to the island. He says dif-

ferent kids from different parts of town would come across in different ways and from different directions.

From what Allen and others remember, kids would fall in the water fairly frequently to be helped out by others. Though no one recalls any fatalities, Wallace Reed says that one time a friend fell through a gap in the logs. The logs were moving and the gap closed. The others frantically tried to reopen the gap, unsuccessfully. It turns out the friend had swam the distance to the bank under the logs and was sitting there watching with amusement their frenzied activity to save him.

Chuck Bergerson says that he and

WARRENTON'S FROG POND

his daredevil friend Harley Crowder would race each other across the logs stripping off their clothes on the way. In one incident Crowder won and dove off the diving board at the pond, and in his haste smashing his head in the process. Another time Chuck was racing across the logs and thought he had enough room to jump onto the next log. However, when he attempted this, he found out that the space was too great and went crashing into the water short of his mark. He recollects that John Neman almost drowned in a similar incident when he lost his footing.

Jack Fenton recalls that the young Martin Nygaard and his co-worker Fred Wilson in their cork boots would mess with boys trying to cross to the island and would deliberately roll the logs, making them fall into the water. Some swimmers were able to cross to the island by handmade boats. Allen Fenton says he and friends would take fish boxes from a local cannery, go down to the city works for tar, melt this over a fire to seal the box seams, and paddle across in their spartan craft.

**“My daredevil friend, Harley Crowder, and I
would race each other across the logs.”**

– Chuck Bergerson

Wallace Reed relates a similar boatbuilding escapade in his youth. He and his pal pilfered lumber from the Prouty mill, built crude skiffs, took tar off the roads and sealed the seams, and paddled around the Tansy Point / Alder Creek and Columbia River region of Warrenton. (Apparently, many youth took tar off the roads in the hot summers for various purposes. R. T. Shappee says he and friends, lacking money for real gum, would chew on gobs of tar on their way to their various fishing holes. He notes that they had to be careful to spit out rather than swallow! This they cheerfully did, imagining they were spitting tobacco juice like their elders.)

As late as the summer of 2010, fish totes and a small boat were spotted on frog pond island – perhaps a continuing legacy of these early ship-bound crossings! ♦



WARRENTON GRADE SCHOOL class photo, 1948-49. Many of the boys here might have been seen at the frog pond. Chuck Bergerson, front row fourth from left.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Various Recollections

Chuck and his brother Darryl Bergerson remember they always had boils on their bodies in the summer from the filthy Skipanon water when young. For, in addition to swimming at the frog pond, it was common to jump off the railroad bridge and swim in the Skipanon just to the north. The water was hardly clean; the Skipanon was the sewer system in those days. The river took waste from the marina upriver at flood tide and moved the town's waste downriver at ebb tide. The boys would sit around and pick each other's boils and scream in pain, Darryl recounts.

Jack Fenton recalls the pond was a daily meeting place for boys to swim, smoke, and socialize. Boys began going to the pond in later elementary school age and stopped going around their ninth or tenth grade years, "when they discovered girls and cars."

Bud Haskill swam at the pond until about 1939 or 40. He says that it was mostly boys, but not exclusively. He

"The pond was a daily meeting place for boys to swim, smoke and socialize."

— Jack Fenton

recalls the local girls Betty Goodrich and her older sister would often come to the pond. The nimble Betty was mischievous, rolling the logs they were crossing and sometimes making Bud fall

navigating the treacherous moving path, she was able to escape the hot pursuit. Betty notes that the girls (herself, Rosemary DeLore, and Elsie Goodrich) were always trying to catch the guys skinny



THE BERGERSON BROTHERS, frequent swimmers at the pond in 1952. Chuck, right, age 16 -- about the age boys stopped going to the swimming hole. Boys stopped going to the frog pond "around the time they discovered girls and cars." Darryl, age 14 center. The car is Chuck's first, a 1938 Dodge.

in the water. The girls were more agile on the logs, and thus chased the boys trying to make them lose their footing. One time one of the boys gave her some guff about swimming in "their pond." So she got out of the water, grabbed a bull thistle and whacked him a good one. She then beat a hasty retreat across the logs. Because she was more adept at

dipping, but never could!

Allen Fenton reminisces that it was difficult to go down the steep west bank and jump to a log in the boom to begin the crossing process. So one time he saw a big piece of plywood in the water and thought he would jump on it and skid/surf across to the nearest log. This he attempted and in the process gashed his leg open about a foot length. Streaming blood, he ran back home where his mother somewhat perfunctorily disinfected the wound with mercurochrome, patched him up, and sent him on his way. He thought by today's hypersensitive standards he would have been sent to the emergency room and given many stitches and much fuss. However, many recall that transportation to Astoria was not so easy in earlier days, forcing people in Warrenton to make do as they could. He also remembers how he and friends used to pester a man nicknamed "Crebby," the

manager of the Nygaard log dump at the end of 3rd St. He speaks of how Crebby for some reason was always angry at the local swimmers. And it is no wonder. The boys would go to the site after hours and throw their equipment into the river!

The island in the Skipanon River with its man made frog pond has changed little with the passing of the years. The pond rises and lowers with the tides; river silt has perhaps made it shallower. The sand is gone along its vegetation-choked banks and there is no longer a log bridge to the island. The industry that once made the area bustle with activity has faded away. Occasionally in the heat of the summer in our day one will hear local youth swimming or paddling from the 2nd Street dock to the dilapidated fort on the west end of the island. But the glory days of this little swimming refuge where so many youth entered young adulthood are long gone. ♦

Archival:

• **Local Astoria newspapers:** *Passim* from *Astoria Budget*; *Astoria Morning Budget*; *Astoria Evening Budget*; *Morning Astorian*; *Evening Astorian-Budget*; *Daily Astorian*. See Astoria Public Library general indices.

• **Clatsop County** "Official Record of Descriptions of Real Property."

• **Lyle Anderson:** *Warrenton's History 1792-1992*. Warrenton: Self-published, 1998.

• **Steve Bagwell:** "Islands in Skipanon are Center of Possible Land-Use Controversy," *Daily Astorian* [May 20, 1974]: 7.

• **Charlotte Bergerson:** *I Remember When. . . A Collection of Stories Published in the Columbia Press from 1992-94*. Vol. 1; Self-published, 1998.

• **M. Bischoff; et alia:** *Skipanon River Watershed Assessment*. E&S Environmental Chemistry, Inc. and Skipanon River Watershed Council. August, 2000.

• **Russ Dart:** *Port of Astoria History*. Unpublished ms; private collection; n.d.

• **M. Guardino III and M. Riedel:** *Sovereigns of Themselves: A Liberating History of Oregon and Its Coast*. Vol. III. July, 2008; Online at: <http://ftp.wi.net/~census/lesson36.html>.

• **Wallace Henry Reed:** *The Adventures of Snooky & Wade*. Self-published, 2007.

• **Clarence Sigurdson:** *Raised by the Sea*. Astoria: Consolidated Printing, 1973.

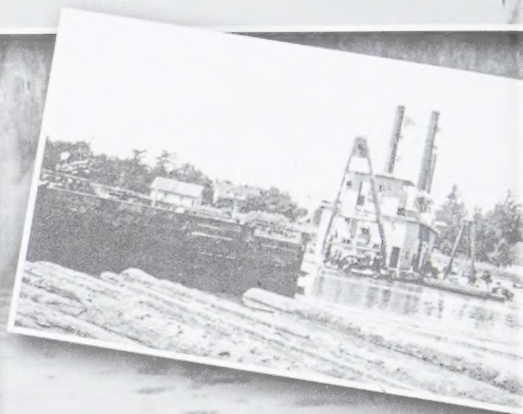
• **R. T. Shappee:** *Making My Way: Memories of a Boyhood along the Skipanon River*. Hoquiam, WA: South Jetty Publishing, 1999.

• **Swan Wooster Engineering:** "Land Use Study of the East side of the Skipanon River . . . for the Port of Astoria, Oregon." Portland, Oregon. 1969. 3.5.1.



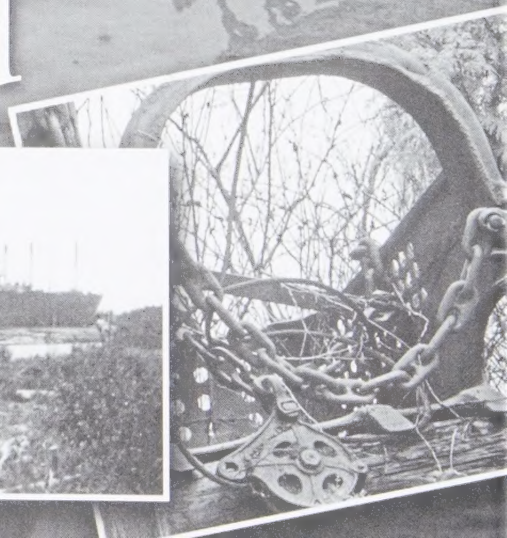
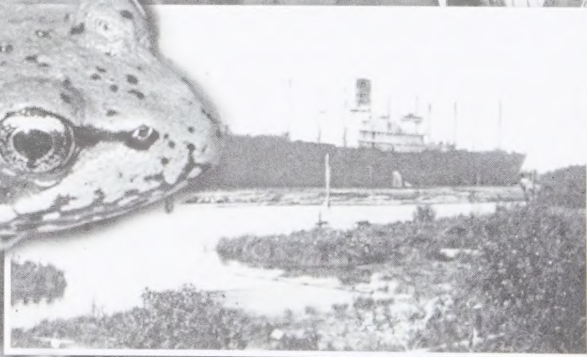
From Warrenton, Oregon to northwest Ohio where I reside, it was a pleasure to work on this book as designer with my "little brother" who is this book's author.

– Sara Welborn



Parting Shots

WARRENTON'S Frog Pond



FROG POND

Warrenton, Oregon



South

3rd Street
log dump area

FROG POND

(Note creek connecting to
the river to the south.)

2nd Street Area
Used to be land before
channel dug. Logs
moved north through
here. (Note small dock.)

To Columbia

Old River Channel